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ABSTRACT

Noting that parents have considerable influence on their children's learning during the process of general socialization, this paper reviews literature from primary and post primary schools about involving parents with their children's reading development. Following an introduction which summarizes the pertinent literature, the first section examines social learning theory and how it applies to reading, including information on home reading programs. The second section examines the psycholinguistic and naturalistic approach, focusing on the importance of every-day reading behavior and common sense meaning in children's literacy development. The third section discusses the implications of the psycholinguistic approach for home reading programs, including a section on pertinent British studies, while the fourth section examines parents as instructors. A conclusion suggests that while involving parents as instructors of reading appears to be a good strategy, very little is known about the relative cost effectiveness of different strategies. (Nine pages of references are included.) (JC)

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CHILDREN'S READING AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

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Summary

Parents have considerable influence on their children's learning in the processes of general socialisation. Much of this learning is relevant to school learning and differences between families in these matters can cause substantial differences in children's school achievements. This applies to children's learning to read. Systematic studies have shown that schools can have considerable success in involving parents in assisting the reading development of low competence readers by using simple techniques of modelling and reinforcement which are part of parents' general socialisation skills. These studies are reviewed.

The implications of psycho-linguistic theory for home-reading programs is analysed - and relevant literature is examined to portray two further approaches:

(a) schools involve parents in activities which are generally supportive of their children's reading development;

(b) parents are trained to develop their children's cognitive/reading skills during reading episodes.

These models have not yet been systematically evaluated.

A miscellaneous collection of studies is reviewed showing evidence of benefits for children's reading competencies resulting from involving family members in their reading development in relation to: involvement of fathers and siblings, summer reading programs, length of programs, intensity of parent training, spelling and vocabulary instruction, phonics oriented methods, increasing parent-school contact, home learning laboratories, counselling students, counselling parents, and using parents as classroom aides.

There is a need for more study of the implementation of home-reading programs, especially with regard to cost effectiveness and strategies for reaching out to less confident parents.

SCHOOLS INVOLVING PARENTS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S READING DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This paper reviews literature on primary and post primary schools involving children's parents in their reading development. It is directed at those concerned with teachers' professional development and at teachers and other educational professionals. The general literature on family influences upon children's literacy development (see Wallatt (1985); Teale (1984a, 1985); Snow, (1983); Becher (1985)) will be touched upon where relevant. Studies using a wide range of methodologies from within both the 'normative' and 'interpretive' research traditions (Wilson, 1970) will be examined.

Teale (1984b) has described children's literacy development in the pre-school stage as 'guided reinvention'. In doing so he emphasises how much children learn for themselves in taking meaning from the literacy relevant activities of their adult care givers, but at the same time indicates the structuring effect of adult activity. Bed-time stories, bible reading, the T.V. guide and shopping lists are examples of different ways of using print and children's understanding will vary a great deal depending on their experiences within the family. Teale argues that the current most important research issue in this area is how much influence to ascribe to 'guidance' as against 're-invention'. In stating the issue in this way Teale specifically takes an 'inside-out' view of literacy development which stresses the active, interpretive role of children's attempts to understand, and rejects an associationist tradition of analysis which has taken the 'outside-in' position. Teale thus draws upon psycho-linguistic theory (Smith, 1982; Goodman, 1984; Holdaway, 1979) and upon ethnographic, conceptual descriptive studies of parent-child literacy related interaction.

In the past the underlying assumption of much study of family influences on children was of a one-way flow of influence from adult to child. But more

upon the learning situation (Bell, 1968), the 'cognitive revolution' in the psychology of cognition (Gordon, 1985), the need to take account of children's intelligence in affecting the kinds of response elicited from parents in book-reading episodes (Tobin, 1981), family systems theory (Bowen, 1977) which emphasises the role of all family members especially fathers (Henry, 1974) and siblings (Barnes, 1984) as well as mother-child dyads, and the interactive relationship between the family, and the school in affecting children's school learning (e.g. Toomey, 1981; Seginer, 1983; Coleman et.al., 1982).

This review will draw both upon these more recent perspectives, and the earlier research partly because there is very little evidence on 'reinvention' from systematically evaluated school based home-reading programs. In this the insights of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) will be used to draw together a deal of relevant evidence.

There are two important bodies of literature relevant to this topic, the one more British in origin, emphasises parents' deliberate influence on children's reading development (as distinct from direct teaching) and draws more upon social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Topping, 1985) and behavioural approaches (Rybaack and Staats, 1970); it provides a larger body of empirical evidence, has been more concerned with 'remedial' reading in mid and late primary and early post primary schooling and has mostly dealt with parents listening to children read. This 'British' body of literature is, broadly speaking, more compatible with a view of home-school relations which emphasises the professional authority of the teacher, described by Litwak and Meyer (1974) as the 'closed door' pattern. Parents work as aides to the teacher, but in the home setting; their role is to reinforce and support school learning which has been initiated and taught by teachers.

The second source, drawing more upon the U.S.A., is more comprehensive, emphasising the influence of the broader social and cultural context on children's reading, as well as the more immediate influence of parents both as models and as deliberate teachers; but it also pays much attention to the child's active, interpretive participation in the construction of

meaning both in relation to the literal meaning of the text and to the uses made of the text within particular socio-cultural contexts. This body of literature has drawn more upon psycholignuistic theory and upon conceptual descriptive studies of parent-child interaction in reading episodes and pays more attention to parental influence upon cognition. It has tended to use ethnographic and qualitative methods of enquiry. Though of great potential value, it has given rise to little in the way of systematically evaluated, school-based, home reading programs.

Broadly speaking one can say that there is a considerable body of evidence and argument which gives strong support to the use of home-reading programs by schools. The first body of evidence named above throws light on the kinds of parent-child interaction likely to be effective in this context, but only in terms of the rather simplistic categories of social learning theory. It also gives no indication of differential effects on different reading competences of different kinds of parent-child strategies. The second body of evidence provides a more finely detailed analysis of parent-child interaction but we can draw from it only suggestions as to possibly fruitful directions for future research on school level interventions.

There is a third somewhat mixed collection of intervention studies in which parents have been used in quite didactic ways to teach reading skills, as distinct from deliberately carrying out modelling and reinforcement activities.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory has much light to throw on parental influence on children's learning within the family. It draws attention to the processes by which adults influence children in the processes of general socialisation and pays attention to parents' modelling the activities concerned, parents' communicating to children their appreciation of the value of the activities, parents' encouraging the child's attempts to carry out the activities, and parents' providing feedback and appropriate sanctions in relation to the child's successes and errors. There is a body of case studies of children who arrive at school already able to read independently without having

received deliberate instruction. These amply demonstrate the above processes, providing evidence of the parents' own reading behaviour, parents' reading frequently to children and discussing the text with them, parents' valuing books and print materials and according to them a special status, parents' answering children's enquiries about environmental or ambient print and about print in texts, parents' providing pencil and paper and encouragement for the children to write and draw, with demonstrations. (For a review see Teale (1981); notable studies are those of Clark (1976) and Durkin (1966); this literature has uncovered cases of this kind at all socio-economic levels and there are two studies specifically devoted to lower socio-economic level familes (Manning and Manning, 1984; Morris et al., 1971). However, what social learning theory does not account for is that private act of insight by which the individual takes meaning from the text, to be dealt with below. These 'self-taught' children are usually above average in general intellectual ability, and are likely to have the capacity to take meaning for themselves earlier than other children.

Hess and Holloway (1983) review a number of studies showing family effects upon children's reading competencies. The categories they use to report these studies are fully compatible with social learning theory, namely: the value placed on literacy, press for achievement (i.e. explicit and implicit expectations), availability of reading and writing materials, reading with children and opportunities for verbal interaction. They identify a number of studies in each of these categories.

The influence of this kind of informal learning within the family upon children's school achievements is attested by a very large body of evidence, including large-scale correlational studies, smaller but more detailed correlational studies, case studies, observation studies using ethnographic techniques, natural setting experiments, school-based intervention studies and studies of family reactions to intervention studies. (For reviews see Toomey, 1987; Hess and Holloway, 1983; Scott-Jones, 1984; Leler, 1983; Henderson, 1981.) This is not the place to review this very substantial body of literature, but a number of relevant points arise from it.

Firstly, this evidence provides a strong justification for teachers involving parents in teaching their own children at home. Secondly it indicates that there are likely to be important variations among parents in the extent to which they are already providing active support in the home to their children's school learning (Hewison and Tizard, 1980; Toomey, 1986a); this has a bearing both on how one interprets the success of interventions and on the strategies of involvement needed for the different groups. Toomey (1986a) has recently provided evidence that normal programs of home-school relations tend to give most information and support to 'enthusiastic' parents who readily visit the school and who are already likely to be giving active home support to their children's schooling; this applies to most schools, including those serving areas of socio-economic disadvantage. The families most in need of this information and support are less likely to receive it. It is especially important that teachers have clearly worked out objectives for home reading programs and their target recipients. Thirdly, the more recent developments in that literature (e.g. Seginer, 1983; Cohen, 1979; Enthwistle and Hayduk, 1976; Toomey, 1981; Coleman et.al., 1982) suggest that the most fruitful approach is to examine the interaction of home and school influences, rather than examining these separately. (See also Heath, 1982; Swanson and Henderson, 1976; Hess and Holloway, 1983.) Thus strategies which involve both home and school are more likely to be effective. A study by McNaughton et.al. (1981), showed that a home based intervention using parents as tutors of retarded readers produced gains in the children's reading competencies which did not carry over into the school; a further study (Glynn, 1985) which also involved the teacher and the school syllabus did identify carry-over effects (see also Winter (1985)). Particularly important is the student's school success; parents of low achieving students are often especially ready to take on a tutorial role with their children, and many of the successful programs have dealt with such families.

Fourthly, the evidence shows that within-family processes are much more important than the families socio-economic status in affecting school achievement (Toomey, 1987). The Institute of Family Studies' 'Children in Families' Project has recently demonstrated this with respect to children's performance on a Cloze reading test, using a particularly comprehensive data

set from Victoria (Amato, forthcoming). Finally, all the types of studies referred to above included studies in which children's reading competencies were included amongst the child learning variables examined.

While the empirical support for home reading programs is considerable, so too is the support at the theoretical level. Home reading programs provide:

* a one-to-one tutoring situation, optimally effective for learning (Bloom, 1984), with immediate feedback and a more interactive, flexible approach capable of adjustment to the student's individual needs. (Hess et.al., 1979) provide evidence of parents as tutors of their children compared with teachers

* opportunities for guided practice so important for reading development

* increased 'time-on task' which benefits school learning (Wahlberg, 1984; Bloom, 1984)

* reinforcement from and modelling by a valued significant other; (Topping, 1985) cites research that modelling is maximally effective when the model is: available and prominent in the child's life; sharing substantial experience with the child; powerful and in control of resources; prestigious and of high status; perceived as competent by the child; seen to enjoy the modelled behaviour; gaining some reward from the modelled behaviour; warm and accepting in emotional home; replicated by multiple similar models; and demonstrating behaviour which yields entry to a group

* an opportunity to train parents and eliminate undesirable practices e.g. excessive use of negative reinforcement, and to explain the approach taken in the school

* long periods of time during which tutor and tutee can come together; Wahlberg (1984) estimates that homes command 6.1 times more learning time than schools during full-time schooling

* opportunities for parents to use a wider range of rewards than is normally available to teachers.

All the above points are broadly compatible with social learning theory.

Graue et.al. (1983) provide a meta-analysis of twenty-nine studies of school based interventions using parents as teachers of their own children; these interventions were in nearly all cases successful (see also Cotton and Savard, 1982, and A.Henderson, 1981).

The psycholinguistic and naturalistic approach

The psycho-linguistic approach to children's reading development (Smith, 1982; Goodman, 1979) argues that competent readers gain meaning from print by taking in only sufficient information from the text as is necessary to guess successfully at its meaning; they use three types of information: the meaning context, which is the most important, syntactical information and graphic-phonic cues. Applied to early literacy development (Goodman, 1984; Smith, 1984; Teale, 1984a; Holdaway, 1979), this leads to an emphasis upon 'natural' learning in the sense of informal learning which is part of general socialisation (as distinct from deliberate pedagogic instruction), in which children acquire an understanding of print by active, interpretive insights into its meaning and social uses as they encounter them e.g. adult reading behaviour, ambient print, story-book reading episodes, alphabet books and friezes, Sesame Street. In this sense 'natural' learning does not refer to some irreducible human learning ability common to every society which is to distinguished from the influence of the culture; print is perceived by the learner to have specific purposes in specific contexts (Teale, 1984a), so that there are many kinds of reading behaviour, which differ in the extent of their relevance to school learning (Heath, 1982, Scribner and Cole, 1981). Taylor (1983) has evidence of differing cultural concepts of literacy within the same family.

There is, then, a very considerable overlap between social learning theory and psycho-linguistic theory; crucial differences lie in the more constructivist approach to cognition employed in the latter, and in the attitude towards the relationship between culture and the curriculum.

For, in this analysis, the boundaries between the school curriculum and the culture of the home and neighbourhood are much more blurred. 'Natural' influences on language and literacy development within the home are seen as providing a foundation for the child's learning in school. The day to day life of the student outside school is thus a proper source of curriculum development and provides a 'natural' basis for the child's literacy and language development in the school - as when the songs, poems and folk stories of local culture are incorporated into the school curriculum, there is a use of local oral history, there may be acceptance of vernacular language in students' written productions, and the language experience and process writing approaches may incorporate local experience. This kind of emphasis is broadly compatible with a 'cultural difference' approach to curriculum development (e.g. Hunt, 1982), the local community as a source of curriculum (e.g. Midwinter, 1972; Rennie, 1985) and home-school match/mismatch approaches to pedagogy (Swanson and Henderson, Au, 1980; Heath, 1982a). However, great care must be taken in applying these ideas to particular school situations to ensure that one is dealing with populations which are sufficiently homogeneous in the relevant cultural matters to justify the use of procedures which take for granted cultural homogeneity. Toomey (1987) has recently reviewed a substantial body of evidence suggesting that differences between families within social classes in how children are treated are very substantial; and the same may well apply to ethnic minorities (Anderson and Stokes, 1984). An attention to individual families may be more profitable (see Ammon and Brandt, 1986, below).

This perspective provides yet an additional powerful justification for involving parents. For it stresses the importance of every-day learning and common sense meaning in children's literacy development, thus giving a central role to parents. It down-plays the professional authority of the teacher and an approach to teaching which reduces the knowledge and skills to be developed, into their simplest irreducible elements, to be mastered

separately in an order predetermined by the teacher and divorced from naturally occurring learning situations: this approach emphasises such matters as phonics, the development of pre-reading skills and the use of reading schemes which place a premium upon the teacher's expertise and tend to keep parents at a distance as ignorant lay persons whose intervention is likely to confuse the child (Smith, 1981, Bucroder, 1956). Psycholinguistic theory is thus especially compatible with 'partnership' (e.g. Seeley, 1985; Litwak and Meyer, 1972; Pettit, 1980), 'family as educator' (Leichter, 1976) and 'community impact' (Leler, 1983) approaches to home-school relations.

Much that is regarded as progressive in contemporary Primary Schools' language teaching has learnt a great deal from research into family influences on children's language and literacy development e.g. the shared book (Holdaway, 1979), language experience (Stauffer, 1970) and process writing (Turbill, 1983), approaches. Explaining this to parents is likely to have the emancipatory effect of reducing lay submissiveness and deference to the professional authority of teachers.

While adults reading to children is a well-established and meaningful social activity, reading to parents by children who are not fluent readers is likely to have a more artificial, school-like character. Though reading aloud is a social accomplishment to be valued in a child's education, silent independent reading at the normal, faster speed is rather more important. The main advantage of hearing children read lies in the practice effect and it seems likely that the advantages of cognitive stimulation and intellectual skill development claimed for home-reading episodes will more readily be achieved when parents are reading to children texts at the much higher level of intellectual demand children can understand compared with the demands of the texts they themselves are capable of reading in the earlier stages of their reading development. Teachers ensuring that books are within the child's level of accomplishment is likely to be more important in parent listening schemes.

Vukelich (1984) has analysed recommendations to parents, made in the U.S. professional literature between 1973 and 1983 by 37 authors, who recommended 24 different activities. The results are shown in Table 1.

Suggestions Most Frequently Made for Parent Reading Involvement

Activity or behaviour	Number of times suggested, out of 24
Read to your child	22
Be a good literate model	14
Provide books, magazines, etc. for the child to read	13
Build a reading atmosphere at home (place, time, library area)	11
Talk and listen to your child	7
Exemplify a positive attitude toward reading, including praising your child for reading	7
Provide experiences for children that are reading related, e.g. library trips, or that can be used to stimulate interest in reading	7
Read environmental signs: capture reading opportunities in the environment	5
Provide contact with paper and pencils	4
Be aware of your child's interests	4

All of the above practices are compatible with both psycho-linguistic and social learning theory.

This advice is quite typical of that given by Australian primary teachers, to my knowledge, and in Australian texts (e.g. Snowball, 1985; Victorian Education Department, 1979; Butler and Clay, 1979; South Australian Education Department, 1980). Yet there are, to my knowledge, no systematic attempts to evaluate the effects of schools implementing home reading programs to 'normal' school populations, using the practices in Table 1.

psycholinguistic theory. The Parent Education Follow Through Program employs the technique of teaching 'disadvantaged' parents 'ten desirable teaching behaviours'. Systematic studies (Olmsted, 1983) have reported considerable success in parents' level of use of these techniques, especially those involving the asking of higher order questions. This Program has been shown to have long term effects (from grades one to three through to mid adolescence) on students' reading competences, as well as on a range of indicators of successful participation in school (Szegda et.al., 1984, 1985).

The 'ten desirable teaching behaviours' are:

1. Before starting an activity, explain what you are going to do.

2. Before starting an activity, give the learner time to familiarize himself or herself with the materials.

3. Ask questions which have more than one correct answer.

4. Ask questions which require multiple word answers.

5. Encourage the learner to enlarge upon his or her answer.

6. Get the learner to ask questions.

7. Give the learner time to think about the problem; don't be too quick to help.

8. Get the learner to make judgements on the basis of evidence rather than by guessing.

9. Praise the learner when he or she does well or takes small steps in the right direction.

10. Let the learner know when his or her answer or word is wrong, but do so in a positive or neutral manner. (Olmsted et.al., 1976)

The success of this approach augurs well for research in which parents are trained to apply skills of this kind within the context of reading episodes, but also heeding the lessons of psycho-linguistic analysis. Although we lack systematically evaluated intervention studies which have explicitly followed the approach set out above, there are some suggestive results in studies which have used parents as teachers of their own children, to be dealt with below. Certainly, correlational studies indicate positive correlations between the frequency of parents reading to children and the level of the children's reading competencies (e.g. Wells, 1981, 1982; Toomey, 1986; Morrow, 1982). But it may well be that those children whose natural abilities give them an advantage and interest in reading activities more frequently request their parents to read to them (Tobin, 1981). Little attention has been paid to this aspect of the relationship in much of the ethnographic literature (an exception is Snow and Chall, 1982). While acknowledging objections to intelligence testing, especially with such young children (McClelland, 1973), it is as well to also acknowledge the complexity of the relationships involved. Williams (1976) provides evidence of three sources of advantage for children born of high IQ parents: their genetic inheritance of a relatively high level of intelligence, the environment their more intelligent parents provide for them, and the level of response from their parents elicited by the quality of their own interactions with the parents. Hess et.al. (1982) also provide evidence of family environment influences on children's reading abilities controlling for the child's and the mother's intelligence test performance.

These considerations raise the thorny issue of causation versus concomitance. As yet we lack carefully controlled experiments which might help to resolve some of these issues; but much of the ethnographic literature provides data so rich in detail as to give considerable descriptive or contextual validity to the claims concerning children's literacy learning e.g. claims concerning the influence on toddlers' vocabulary development of parents reading picture books to them (Ninio and Bruner, 1977; Moerk, 1985), and the sophisticated language achievements of three year olds repeating and summarising their favourite, often-heard stories (Snow et.al., n.d.; Holdaway, 1979; Snow and Ninio, 1986). Without attempting to review the whole of that literature, attention will be

drawn to those of its insights of most potential value to school-managed home reading programs. Snow (1983) reviewing the literature on observation studies of parent-child reading episodes, points to four crucial aspects of these interactions which affect the child's learning: semantic contingency, routines, 'scaffolding' and accountability. The first two refer more to children learning, the last two to adult guidance.

'Semantic contingency' denotes the process whereby the child's learning from the interaction starts from some utterance or communication of the child e.g. the child points to a picture in a book and vocalises, and the parent models the correct pronunciation of the word for the object; or, the child names a letter which she sees on the page and the mother points out that letter begins the child's name, and asks the child to spell it. This points to a fundamental principle of learning emphasised within the naturalistic paradigm and constructivist psychology, namely the importance of the child's own construction of meaning as a starting point for adult guidance. Apart from the factor of interest, it is argued that direct instruction which starts from the adult perspective is likely to overload the short-term memory of the child whereas the 'semantic contingency' approach starts from something which is in the long-term memory or is in the process of transference to it (Hess and McDevitt, 1984:2018; Moerk, 1985). Routines occur when there is some element of repetition in the child's experience as with repeated readings of the same story or nursery rhyme, repetitions within a story, rhymes, alliteration and assonance or games such as 'This little pig went to market'. Repetition encourages retention in the short-term memory and transference to the long term memory, thus facilitating integration of these fragments into larger structures next time the repetition occurs. Repetition and rhyming also involve redundancy of information which assists mastery (Moerk, 1985). Snow et.al. (n.d.) and Snow and Ninio (1986) cite evidence of the impressive accomplishments of three year olds in their ability to remember, repeat, paraphrase and summarise their favourite stories (see also Robinson and Sulzby, 1984; Morrow, 1984; and Holdaway, 1979). Presumably the repetition assists the gradual mastery of the component elements and, ultimately, their integration into more complex structures, with pictures being available as cues to support these developments.

Scaffolding by contrasts refers to the parents' efforts to simplify the child's task of understanding e.g. by turning the pieces of a jig-saw the right way up.

Moerk (1985) gives an account of the advantages of early picture book reading episodes based on a review of evidence. They allow the adult to disambiguate the child's learning by focussing on the salient characteristics of what is to be learnt e.g. line drawings have this characteristic as distinct from photographs, the objects are not moving and each time they are encountered in the book they appear as the same, the adult can direct the child's attention to salient points more easily than with real objects, the book is near and the child is close, the book can represent exotic objects outside the child's personal experience.

The term 'scaffolding' refers to the fact that the parent provides support for the child's learning which eventually becomes withdrawn as the child advances in its mastery and becomes more independent.

'Accountability' refers to the parent's insistence that the child persists with tasks and is not easily distracted from the task to hand.

Perhaps the most important implication of this body of literature for schools is the claim that book reading activities in the home provide an important bridge between spoken language in the home which is, usually, heavily situation dependent, and the printed texts used in schools which use language that is largely situation independent in the sense that the text can be understood without the aid of any para linguistic cues or situation specific information of a highly particularistic kind (Snow, 1983). This distinction is often described as 'contextualised - decontextualised'. Smith (1982) points out that a crucial difference between spoken and written language lies in the fact that listeners can help verify their understanding by reference to the immediate situation, whereas the reader must refer to consistencies and inconsistencies within the text to do this.

As Snow and Ninio (1986:37) write

> face-to-face communication is not that the first is visual and the second is auditory, but that different rules are in effect.

They argue that

> Full literacy skill involves the ability to create and comprehend realities that depend for their existence entirely on language. The problems children have with learning to read may derive more from the difficulty of dealing with a fictional world, in books.....or in verbal play, may provide valuable practice in the decontexual-ization skills necessary to read nonfictional autonomous texts as well. (p.37)

At the simplest level, coping with decontextualised meaning, involves a literal understanding of the text divorced from any supports to the acquisition of meaning which derive from the interpersonal situation in which the act of reading occurs. Story book reading episodes can help develop this mastery by providing experience of such decontextualised usage, with appropriate 'scaffolding' (Wells, 1981). But reading for school related purposes in our culture is likely to involve much more than literal comprehension, in particular the performing of mental operations on the meanings extracted from the text.

> What is going to be required for success in our educational system is that (the child) should learn to turn language and thought in upon themselves. He must become able to direct his own thought processes in a thoughtful manner. He must become able not just to talk, but to choose what he will say, not just to interpret but to weight possible interpretations. His conceptual system must expand in the direction of increasing ability to represent itself. He must become capable of manipulating symbols.
>
> (Donaldson, 1978:43)

Part of the pre-industrial culture of the Vai, an African people, was their development of a form of print, peculiar to their own culture, which was (and is) used only for the purposes of keeping diaries or writing personal letters, both language activities in which the conveying of meaning is likely to be highly situation-dependent. Scribner and Cole (1981) compared Vai users of print with Vai who had attended westernised schools and who had learnt to read English; important differences were found in their intellectual skills on tasks of sorting, offering logical explanations,

explaining grammatical rules, explaining the instructions to a game and giving answers to hypothetical questions about name switching. This suggests that the ability to understand meaning conveyed by print, is not of itself so important, as the uses to which print is put.

Heath's (1982a:56) study of teachers and their children (i.e. 'mainstream school oriented children') has claims to make in this respect.

> Close analyses of how mainstream school oriented children came to learn to take from books at home suggest that such children learn not only how to take meaning from books, but also how to talk about it. In doing the latter, they repeatedly practice routines which parallel those of classroom interaction. By the time they enter school they have had continuous experience as information-givers, they have learned how to perform in those interactions which surround literate sources throughout school. They have had years of practice in interaction situations that are the heart of reading, both learning to read and reading to learn in school. They have developed habits of performing which enable them to run through the hierarchy of preferred knowledge about a literate source and the appropriate sequence of skills to be displayed in showing knowledge of a subject. They have developed ways of decontextualizing and surrounding with explanatory prose the knowledge gained from selective attention to objects. They have learned to listen, waiting for the appropriate cue which signals it is their turn to show off this knowledge. They have learned the rules for getting certain services from parents (or teachers) in the reading interaction (Merritt, 1979). In nursery school, they continue to practice these interaction patterns in a group rather than in a dyadic situation. There they learn additional signals and behaviours necessary for getting a turn in a group, and responding to a central reader and to a set of centrally defined reading tasks. In short, most of their waking hours during the preschool years have enculturated them into (1) all those habits associated with what explanations, (2) selective attention to items of the written text, and (3) appropriate interactional styles for orally displaying all the know-how of their literate orientation to the environment. This learning has been finely tuned and its habits are highly interdependent. Patterns of behaviors learned in one setting or at one stage reappear again and again as these

> children learn to use oral and written language in literacy events and to bring their knowledge to bear in school-acceptable ways.

In her research, what is important is not simply reading stories to children, but the mental operations which children learn in book reading episodes and the effect upon their capacity to use book-derived information in ways required by schools.

What is especially important about parents as teachers is that in the intimate relations within the family, cognition and affect come together (Scribner and Cole, 1973). Vygotsky's (1978) argument that thought involves the internalisation of social relationships points up the considerable advantages in schooling for children who acquire sophisticated intellectual skills within the family. Indeed these are those who argue that schools, generally speaking, fail to equalise opportunities by teaching such skills, and hence operate to confirm educational inequality (Young, 1983).

Sigel (1982) refers to as 'parent distancing strategies' the use by parents of questions which require children to represent the world to themselves in order to give an answer. He and his co-workers have ordered these strategies into a hierarchy according to the complexity of the mental activities involved: recall, description, paraphrasing, inferring, predicting, analysing, hypothesising and imagining. His evidence suggests that the use of these distancing strategies facilitates the development of children's cognitive skills. Parent-child book-reading episodes are replete with opportunities for parents to use such distancing strategies, and it appears from Heath's (1982) research that many of them do so.

Further, there is evidence that meta-cognitive skills tend to become generalised only after their being employed many times (Rowe, 1986:6; Derry and Murphy, 1986). Parents are in a particularly strong position to encourage this kind of repetition and generalisation. Recent research by Rowe (1986) suggests a useful role for parents in this respect.

In the above discussion 'decontextualisation' refers to putting to other uses, with an autonomous semantic significance, information gleaned from the text. But decontextualisation also refers to taking items of text out of

context and teaching them or dealing with them in a way that gives them no new semantic context, as with alphabetic and phonic drills, flash cards and word lists; in this case the defining context is, usually, the pedagogic context. Heath (1982a:63) has argued that in 'Roadville', the literate, working class community she studied, the uses to which print was put in many cases had this 'decontextualised' character, with much emphasis on the use of the alphabet, the use of alphabet and picture books for naming objects and colours and the use of primers. Also in this community there was an emphasis on the literal meaning of texts and no encouragement to re-frame the content of texts through, for example, imaginative play. 'Any fictionalised account of a real event ...viewed as a lie' (p.63). Heath argues that these children must receive input in their background for many of the 'decontextualised' drill-like activities of the early Primary School syllabus, but not for understanding decontextualised texts.

However Bryant and Bradley (1985) argue that successful reading in the earlier stages of schooling requires a good sight vocabulary, without which students find it difficult to process information in the text with sufficient speed to be able to make use of semantic cues. There may then be some advantage in parents teaching decontextualised items of reading knowledge; the final section of this paper describes experiments in which parents have been successfully used in this way as instructors of their own children notable examples are Russell (1985) and Neidermeyer (1970).

There is, however, a serious issue of validity which faces us in the ethnographic literature. Teale's (1984a) review summarises a number of effects upon children's knowledge and competencies derived from parent-child reading episodes e.g. children learning that print has meaning, children coming to enjoy reading, effects on children's concepts of books, print and reading, children's word and letter recognition, familiarity with written dialect, understanding of story schema, and metalinguistic awareness. Basically the causal connection is established by an observer drawing an inference or the parent, or more rarely the child, asserting a connection. But the authenticity of this observation relies almost wholly on the fact that in the pre-school phase usually the parents are the main source of this informal teaching. When the child is in school, this is, usually, no longer

the case. Below are cited a number of studies which throw doubt on the validity of parents' uncorroborated assertions with respect to their own influence on their school age children's reading development. This makes the plea for systematic intervention studies all the more potent.

The orientation to evaluating reading progress within the naturalistic paradigm emphasises an attention to everyday reading accomplishments having 'ecological validity' and it eschews the use of norm referenced, standardised texts as referring to 'non natural' performances and as involving undesirable practices of invidious discrimination. Unfortunately, almost all of the evidence we happen to have of the effects of home-reading programs on student learning is in the form of standardised test scores, which, for all their limitations, are better than nothing.

Implications of the psycholinguistic approach for home-reading programs:

As argued above, normally home reading programs should take their character from the in-school program, which, in this context is likely to emphasise children's interest and their experience of activity based learning and to lean towards language experience and process-writing approaches rather than to the use of formal reading schemes. Activities of the kind recommended in Table 1 are broadly compatible with this approach. Relevant texts are: Victorian State Education Department (1981); Snow and Goldfield (1984); Taylor (1985); Butler and Clay (1979). Much of this practice is already widely accepted, though we await systematic evaluation of it (Becher, 1985:50).

A 'process-content' distinction has been made by Ammon and Brandt (1986) authors of the Super Home Reading Project. As indicated above, there are two contrasting emphases within the psycholinguistic approach one leaning more to adult guidance the other to child discovery. The 'process' approach is more compatible with the latter; it emphasises the importance of warm-supportive relationships for the child during reading episodes, with much attention to enjoyment, interest and making links with the child's experience. The 'content' approach concentrates more on the meaning of the text with the parent asking questions which place intellectual demands upon

the child, asking questions requiring recall, describing, paraphrasing, inferring, predicting, analysing hypothesising and imagining activities. Certainly the analysis given above suggests a powerful role for parents in developing children's cognitive skills during reading episodes. But to some this may go too far in the direction of direct instruction. As Ammon and Brandt (1986) point out, there is little in the literature which points to different reading outcomes from different parental strategies and their aim is to see what gains can be made by adjusting the treatment of the child in the school to that received by the child at home during reading episodes. This promises to be a fruitful point of development for future research, especially if it leads to a comparison of the effects of 'process' versus 'content' oriented strategies in the home.

Ammon and Brandt's (1986) strategy here is more in line with a form of home/school match-mismatch-analysis which focuses on differences between individual families and the school environment (Hansen, forthcoming; Epstein, 1983) rather than on school-community differences (e.g. Au, 1980; Heath, 1982).

Other strategies whose use by parents deserve investigation are: the use of predictable texts (Rhodes, 1985), children re-telling stories (Morrow, 1985) repeated reading of stories (Snow and Dubber, 1984; Martinez and Rosen, 1985), students asking parents questions about stories (Becher, 1985), encouraging children to focus on the main ideas, monitor their own comprehension and to retrieve relevant prior knowledge (Ammon and Brandt, 1986), teaching about story structures (Abrahamson and Shannon, 1984; Mandler and Johnson, 1977), and directing the child's attention to the relation between spoken and written words (Tobin, 1981).

The British literature has concentrated largely on parents listening to children (with various modifications), and on the social processes involved. A major turning point was the study of Hewison and Tizard (1980) which reported that parental coaching of children's reading was rather more predictive of children's reading achievements and other school learning than an array of other within-family process variables analysed in a deal of previous research. Following from this a project was mounted in which

parents of grade one children in a disadvantaged locality listened to their children read 2 to 4 times a week over a two year period. Particular care was made to recruit all the families with the parents contracting to take part. The students made notable gains in their performance on the National Foundation for Educational Research's Reading Test, their average being above that of the national norm for the test; they outperformed a comparison group which had received extra coaching from a reading specialist over the two year period, as well as a non treatment control group (Tizard et.al., 1982). No special training was given to the parents concerned, though they were visited regularly and punitive practices were discouraged.

A similar approach was used in the Infants Department of Belfield School (Jackson and Hannon, 1981) which succeeded in raising the percentage of parents hearing reading 'almost everyday' to around 20 per cent (Hannon, Jackson and Page, 1985). Positive results have been reported in a similar project with 18 Junior School remedial readers (Dyson and Swinson, 1982) and with 6 'educationally subnormal' children aged 8 to 9, of parents who volunteered to take part (Knapman, 1985). The scheme has been widely taken up in certain parts of the U.K. For example the Inner London Educational Authority has developed the PACT scheme which encourages teachers to involve parents in their children's reading development; there is one excellent report on the practical working of the scheme (Griffiths and Hamilton, 1984).

Topping (1985) writes as if these developments were a rather novel departure in British education. Hannon and Cuckle's (1985) British survey evidence also suggests a rather low level of teachers involving parents in children's reading development at home, whereas Epstein's (1984) evidence from Maryland suggests that over 80 per cent of elementary school teachers do this; both reports emphasise the generally low level of home-school cooperation in students' learning. No comparable survey evidence is available for Australia, though my knowledge of the professional literature and the countries involved suggests that the Australian situation is nearer to the U.S. than to the U.K. in this respect.

The British approach has developed in the direction of giving rather more systematic advice to parents; the following categories indicate successively more sophisticated procedures: the reinforcement model, paired reading, the Mangere approach, and parent instruction about the reading process. The reinforcement approach is to be found in Australian (e.g. Rees, 1978; Umansky and Umansky, 1976), U.S. (e.g. Ryeback and Staats, 1970) and British (e.g. Fry, 1985) studies. Studies using parents to employ reinforcement techniques in order to train children to eliminate undesirable behaviour has been reviewed by Johnson and Katz (1973) in relation to medical conditions and by Barth (1979) in relation to school behaviour problems. Basically, the argument is that, for the reasons set out above on page 8, the parent is likely to be especially effective in administering reinforcements in the home setting. In connection with reading the technique has been most used with children defined as being in need of remediation. Parents are trained to listen to children read and to praise for success and to correct errors. The technique has largely been used by psychologists and others working directly with parents, which falls outside our brief. But its general level of success (e.g. Topping and Wolfendale, 1985) does give support to home reading schemes.

Paired reading draws more upon psycholinguistic theory; it has two phases. In the first the child and the tutor read out loud together, at the child's pace, using a book chosen by the child. If the child makes an error the tutor models the correct reading and the child self-corrects. The aim is to develop the child's reading from a hesitant, dependent style to a more fluent, independent style. In Australia this approach has been referred to as the 'Neurological Impress Method' or the Lap Method (Heckleman, 1969).

In the second phase, as the children become more confident they indicate to the tutor that they will read independently; if the child starts to make errors, a smooth transition back to phase one is employed. The technique has been used exclusively with 'remedial' readers, and studies using a pre-post test design, with control groups have reported impressive gains in reading accuracy and comprehension, on the Neale test, from treatments lasting from six weeks to 6.25 months (see six studies in Topping and Wolfendale (1985)). Its advantages are that it is simple and relatively

painless. It avoids the halting delivery characteristic of so many remedial readers reading aloud, and is hence likely to reduce the boredom, tension and frustration reported as being experienced by some parents in this situation (Searle, 1985; Kemp, 1985). Informal reports emphasise the substantial improvements in children's and parents' attitudes to reading and home reading activities. It is also said that families need support and monitoring in the early stages, especially in handling the transition from Phase One to Phase Two.

The Mangere approach (McNaughton et.al., 1981) from Auckland, New Zealand, has modified the behavioural approach in the light of psycholinguistic theory, using a 'pause, prompt, praise' formula. Parents are taught to pause when a child makes an error encouraging the child to read on and then to self-correct, the theory being that the meaning context may help the child to self-correct (similar techniques are to re-read previous sentences and to read the following sentence). Parents praise the child for being correct, and especially for self-correction. Prompting refers to the parent supplying cues, including phonic cues, to help the child self-correct. The initial program was quite expensive in that it involved intensive training of the parents. (It has produced two training films 'Remedial Reading a Family Affair' and 'Helping You Help Your Child', which are widely used in Australia, and a manual (Robinson et.al., 1980) which can be used without expensive parent-training procedures.) The project was successful in producing considerable gains in reading age on the part of remedial readers aged between eight and twelve. A number of Victorian Post Primary schools have set up home-reading programs influenced by the British approach (e.g. Van Laar, 1985; Read, 1985).

One key issue for research using interventions of the 'British' variety, is the relative importance of the effect upon students' interest of involving parents as against the influence of the parents' instructional activities.

Parents as Instructors

Schools involving parents in direct instruction of their children has taken a variety of forms. Most of this work is reported from the U.S. often in

'fugitive' literature and is available in Australia only via secondary sources, of which Leler (1983), Cotton and Savard (1982), Boehnlein and Hager (1985) and Sartain (1978) are the most useful especially the first two. For the most part, little information is available on the form of parent instruction nor the detail of the training received by parents. Leler (1983:157) cites 18 such experimental studies of which 13 found in favour of the experimental group and none in favour of the control group; all concerned elementary level students. Cotton and Savard's (1982) review is concerned with parents as tutors of their own children in all subjects at the elementary and secondary school levels but they cite 4 experimental studies, involving reading, not cited by Leler, which report in favour of the experimental group. The intensity of the instruction varied from 15-20 minutes instruction per day for ten weeks to daily instruction for eight months. (N.B. The highly successful Haringey Project lasted two years.)

It is notable that in the three experiments producing non-significant results the parents received little training - usually an orientation session plus a package of take-home materials given out, although four 'successful' programs had parent training sessions of similarly weak intensity. In two of the 'unsuccessful' programs the researcher specifically noted the positive effect upon the parents' attitude towards involvement in their child's education, and the parents' beliefs that the child benefited from the instruction. Gray (1975) in a review of British intervention studies points out that parental enthusiasm for the intervention is often not supported by 'objective' evidence on the children's learning. Toomey (1986a) found parental reports of the effectiveness of home reading activities well predictive of reading success, but pointed out that parents may be witnessing reading development which is also likely to be the result of in-school instruction. This points up the need for triangulation in assessment of the success of programs (e.g. Winter, 1985). Tizard, Mortimer and Burchell (1981) point out that, whatever the effects on students' learning, involving parents as tutors is very good for the climate of home-school relations. Parents are usually most enthusiastic about home reading programs (Toomey, 1986b).

Kemp (1985) provides a detailed description of an Australian program for teaching parents of remedial readers.

The variety of schemes in which parents are used as tutors of their own children, suggests that parents can be enlisted to teach almost anything (e.g. Graue et.al., 1983, Cotton and Savard, 1982). For example Neidermeyer (1970) describes a scheme in which parents gave kindergarten children successful instruction of an intensive kind in phonic drills, blendings, suffixes and affixes. Russell (1985) reports a program in which parents received extensive instruction in teaching their seventh grade children spelling and vocabulary. The International Reading Association (1984) provides a directory of parents and reading programs. Programs are so varied in their approaches as to be almost exotic: factories, libraries, radio and television broadcasts, churches, lunch-time meetings are examples of settings used in addition to the normal ones of school and home.

Other findings of note are: a program involving fathers with 'remedial' sons produced greater gains in reading scores than for mother-son pairs (Henry, 1974); siblings have been found to be effective tutors (Gallimore, Thaup and Speidel, 1978; Barnes, 1984; Cicirelli, 19766:101).

The Home and School Institute has developed a technique of 'Home Learning Recipes', simple learning formulae using the home and parents as a resource for learning; there is systematic evidence of the advantages of this technique for the reading development of 1st graders (Rich, 1976).

Programs increasing the frequency of parent-school contact have been found to influence reading achievement (Iverson, 1981; Toomey, 1986). An experiment was conducted in which the amount of supervision from the school received by parents in a home tutoring program was varied systematically. Though no discernible effects on student learning were identified, the parents receiving more supervision expressed higher levels of confidence, tutored more regularly and worked at a faster pace (O'Neill, 1975). Toomey (1986) reports evidence that many home-school relations programs fail to reach parents who are less confident in dealing with the school. An experiment by Duff (1972), for this reason, used a home visiting approach in

a disadvantaged locality. The parents received training in nine behaviours supportive of their children's school progress; the children in the experiment obtained higher scores on a test of reading competence, their teachers reported a higher level of satisfaction with them and six of the nine behaviours were successfully mastered by the parents. Relevant to these findings is a study by Bar-Lev (1976) in which teachers were asked to distinguish parents of students who helped and did not help in their school learning at home (grades 3 to 8). The experiment involved training parents to increase their children's motivation and desirable classroom behaviour; a pre-post test design, with experimental and control groups was used. The findings indicated that both 'helping' and 'non-helping' parents can be trained to improve their children's motivation and classroom behaviour.

A number of projects have involved parents as classroom aides with successful consequences for the children's reading developments (Hopkins, 1982; Woods, 1974; Wilmon, 1969; Berlin and Berlin, 1973). Cotton and Savard (1982:39) also cite studies that parents working as para-professionals facilitates their children's development at the pre-school level.

Counselling of students has been found to improve their reading achievements (Lawrence, 1973) and counselling of parents of remedial readers has been reported (Kemp, 1985; Ireland, 1985).

A study by Epstein (1984) is of special note in that it systematically examined influences on students' reading and maths achievements of programs run by elementary school teachers who were selected as especially concerned and effective in regularly involving parents as teachers of their own children at home. This study showed reading gains by students in these teachers' classes to be above those of others surveyed, controlling for: the overall quality of the teacher in teaching skills, the parents' level, of education, student homework practices and parents' responses to teachers' attempts to communicate with them; gains in mathematics were not significantly different. The study is especially noteworthy because it took normal school practice as the object of enquiry. Single parents (Epstein,

1985) and parents in socioeconomically disadvantaged schools (Epstein, 1984) were found to be especially responsive to the efforts of such teachers.

Conclusion

We must conclude that those Primary level teachers who do not involve children's parents in their reading development are likely, thereby, to cause relative disadvantage for them; this is especially true at the earlier stages, and with less competent readers. Involving parents is an effective strategy.

But we must also conclude that we know very little about what particular strategies are most likely to be effective (a) in the organisation of the home school relations program, and (b) in guidance to parents as to what help should be given.

While it seems reasonable to conclude that children's learning will be improved, the longer the period of time over which parents are involved, and the more intensive the amount of training, support and guidance received by the parents, we know virtually nothing about the relative cost effectiveness of different types of strategy. The Haringey Project was especially effective without any formal instruction of the parents.

We need no more studies telling us that involving parents in home reading programs is a useful strategy. That has already been confirmed. What we need now is more differentiated information. Particularly important is whether instructing parents makes much difference; is any benefit derived largely from an increase in the child's interest? If so, does this differ for different ages and levels of reading competence? If not, which kinds of parent intervention produce which kinds of results for students of differing ages, backgrounds and levels of competence?

Particularly important is the question of the relative merits of reading to and listening to children. Also of special interest is the relative merits

of the different strategies which have been used successfully with low competence readers e.g. paired reading, praise, prompt pause, no guidance.

We need to examine advantages and disadvantages of training parents with respect to:

* a knowledge of story structures
* the use of parental distancing strategies (Sigel, 1982) in reading episodes
* repeated readings of favourite stories
* story re-telling by children
* different parent styles in reading episodes
* parents developing children's meta cognitive skills.

Of particular concern is the likelihood that the good news about parent involvement may be taken up by teachers without sufficient care as to its consequences. We already know that differences between families in parental involvement in schooling is a major source of educational inequality (Jencks, 1972; Coleman et.al., 1982). By widening the arena of teachers' work to include actively involving parents, there is a strong danger that we will widen the arena within which these inequitable family effects can operate (Toomey, 1986a). There is evidence that reaching out to include the less confident parents' works (Duff, 1972; Bar-Lev, 1976; Mee, 1985; Toomey, 1986a). Many of the British programs worked on the basis of inviting parents of low competence readers to be involved - and these showed much success. It is important that scarce resources for home-school relations programs be targeted to those who are most in need: low competence readers whose parents do not realise how useful their help can be.

It is also clear, though, that parents are becoming increasingly recognised as important in assisting their children's school learning. It is to be hoped that research will be able to contribute productively to these developments.

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